

Message Text

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INFO AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

USMISSION USBERLIN

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TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: THE CDU NATIONAL CONVENTION IN THE SHADOW OF
FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS

REF: BONN 10003

BEGIN SUMMARY: BENEATH THE IMAGE OF SOLIDARITY AND
SMOOTH FUNCTIONING OF THE 23RD CDU NATIONAL CONVENTION
THERE WAS AN UNDERCURRENT OF TENSION. THE SPECTER OF
CSU CHAIRMAN FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS CAST A LONG SHADOW OVER
THE CDU CONVENTION. CDU CHAIRMAN KOHL'S KEYNOTE SPEECH,
FOR EXAMPLE, HAD A TOUGHER TONE THAN USUAL, PARTLY TO
PROJECT A FIGHTING IMAGE AND PARTLY AS A BOW TO THE MORE
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CONSERVATIVE BAVARIANS. HIS OVERWHELMING RE-ELECTION

AS CDU CHAIRMAN (98.5 PERCENT OF THE VOTE) WAS MEANT AS A DEMONSTRATION OF SOLIDARITY ON THE PART OF THE DELEGATES IN FACE OF THE CSU'S RELUCTANT SUPPORT FOR KOHL AS THE UNION CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE IN 1976. WHEN STRAUSS ADDRESSED THE CONVENTION ON THE SECOND DAY HE WAS HARDLY MORE FORTHCOMING THAN THE CSU HAD BEEN IN THE JUNE 19 CDU/CSU COMMUNIQUE (REFTEL). WHILE HE PRAISED KOHL'S KEYNOTE SPEECH AND HIS IMPRESSIVE RE-ELECTION, STRAUSS' SPEECH WAS LESS THAN A RINGING ENDORSEMENT FOR THE CDU CHAIRMAN. KOHL AND BIEDENKOPF HAD SET SOLIDARITY AS THE MOST IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE OF THE CONVENTION AND FOR THE MOST PART THEY WERE SUCCESSFUL. HOWEVER, STRAUSS DID MANAGE TO OPEN SOME OLD WOUNDS WITH HIS REFERENCE TO THE 1972 INNER-PARTY DISPUTE OVER THE EASTERN TREATIES. THE DIFFERENCES CONTINUE TO PLAGUE THE CDU/CSU ON THE EVE OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGNS AND IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO CONSTRUCT A MORE UNIFIED FRONT IF THE UNION WANTS TO WIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN NEXT YEAR'S ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY

1. ALTHOUGH BOTH KOHL AND BIEDENKOPF HAD BEEN TOO PREOCCUPIED IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS WITH THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE CSU OVER THE CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE QUESTION AND THE WIRETAPPING AFFAIR TO DEVOTE ATTENTION TO PREPARATIONS FOR THE JUNE 23-25 CONVENTION IN MANNHEIM, THE CONVENTION WAS VERY EFFICIENTLY RUN AND THEY SUCCEEDED IN THEIR GOAL OF PROJECTING AN IMAGE OF A UNIFIED CDU READY TO TAKE ON THE SPD IN NEXT YEAR'S ELECTIONS.

2. KOHL GAVE AN HOUR AND A HALF KEYNOTE ADDRESS WHICH WAS MORE AGGRESSIVE IN TONE THAN HIS USUAL SPEECHES. HE ATTACKED SPD CHANCELLOR HELMUT SCHMIDT AND BLAMED THE COALITION GOVERNMENT FOR THE FRG'S PRESENT ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. HE WAS MORE EXPLICIT THAN IN THE PAST IN BRANDING THE GOVERNMENT "SOCIALISTIC" AND CRITICIZED A NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES INCLUDING EDUCATION AND FOREIGN POLICIES. THE CDU CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE ALSO HAD SOME HARD WORDS FOR THE FDP AS WELL. HE CALLED FOR A CDU/CSU GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD RESTORE THE GERMAN CITIZENS' FAITH IN THEIR GOVERNMENT AND WHICH WOULD ASSIST LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE UNDER-REPRESENTED AND UNORGANIZED GROUPS IN THE SOCIETY.

3. LACKING THE ORATORY SKILLS TO ELECTRIFY AN AUDIENCE, SUFFERING FROM VOICE PROBLEMS AND PLAGUED WITH A FAULTY PA SYSTEM, THE CDU CHAIRMAN NEVERTHELESS RECEIVED AN EMOTIONAL STANDING OVATION AT THE CONCLUSION OF HIS SPEECH. THAT AFTERNOON HE WAS RE-ELECTED PARTY CHAIRMAN

WITH ONE OF THE GREATEST MAJORITIES IN THE HISTORY OF THE CDU (I.E., 696 YES, 5 NO AND 6 ABSTAINED). IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE DELEGATES WANTED TO SHOW THEIR BAVARIAN COUSINS THE DEPTH OF SUPPORT WITHIN THE CDU FOR THEIR CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE.

4. KOHL'S OBJECTIVE AT THE CONVENTION WAS TO AVOID ANY DIVISIVE ISSUES WHICH MIGHT WEAKEN PARTY SOLIDARITY. RATHER THAN CHANCING AN ELECTION FIGHT FOR THE PRESID-UM, HE APPOINTED RAINER BARZEL TO THE PRESIDIUM (WITH-

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OUT VOTING RIGHTS). THIS TACTIC WAS ONLY PARTLY SUCCESSFUL AND ALFRED DREGGER DECIDED IN THE MORNING OF THE ELECTION TO RUN FOR ONE OF THE DEPUTY CHAIRMEN POSITIONS AND ONLY FAILED BY 41 VOTES TO BE ELECTED. AS A RESULT UNITY WAS PRESERVED AND THE FIVE PRESENT DEPUTY CHAIRMEN WERE RE-ELECTED.

5. WHEN STRAUSS ARRIVED TO SPEAK ON THE SECOND DAY OF THE CONVENTION, HE WAS GREETED WITH EXTREMELY RESTRAINED APPLAUSE. THE CSU'S HALF-HEARTED ENDORSEMENT OF KOHL AS UNION CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE JUNE 19 HAD LEFT MOST DELEGATES BITTER AND ANGRY. HOWEVER, IF THEY WERE EXPECTING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STRAUSS TO MEND HIS WAYS OR TO BE INTIMIDATED BY THE 700 CDU DELEGATES, THEY WERE TO BE DISAPPOINTED. STRAUSS PRAISED KOHL FOR HIS "FIGHTING" KEYNOTE ADDRESS AND HIS RE-ELECTION AS PARTY CHAIRMAN BUT HIS ENDORSEMENT OF KOHL AS UNION CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE (A TERM CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT IN THE SPEECH) WAS NOTHING IF NOT RESTRAINED. HE SAID THAT HE AND THE CSU SUPPORTED KOHL "SO THAT HE COULD ACHIEVE HIS GOAL." THIS WAS CHANGED IN THE TEXT RELEASED TO THE PRESS TO READ: "I WISH HELMUT KOHL THE BEST OF LUCK AND US GREAT SUCCESS IN THE COMMON BATTLE." THE SPEECH ITSELF, WHICH WAS LACKLUSTER COMPARED TO VINTAGE FRANZ JOSEF, WAS A VIGOROUS ATTACK AGAINST THE SPD AND FDP.

6. STRAUSS DID NOT MISS THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE AN OBLIQUE GIBE AT HIS OLD ENEMY BARZEL FOR THE LATTER'S PERFORMANCE DURING THE 1972 EASTERN TREATIES DEBATE AND NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE IN THE BUNDESTAG. LATER, BARZEL MADE A BRIEF STATEMENT (WHICH RECEIVED LOUD APPLAUSE) DEFENDING HIS PAST ACTIONS AND STATING THAT HE PLANNED TO BE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE TOP CDU COUNCILS. ALTHOUGH STRAUSS RECEIVED MORE APPLAUSE AT THE CONCLUSION OF HIS SPEECH THAN BEFORE, IT WAS CLEAR THAT HE HAD NOT SATISFIED THE CDU DELEGATES.

7. SECRETARY GENERAL BIEDENKOPF FOLLOWED STRAUSS TO THE PODIUM AND RECEIVED AN ENTHUSIASTIC WELCOMING OVATION. WHILE THIS WAS PARTLY A RESPONSE TO SHOW STRAUSS WHERE THEY STOOD, IT WAS ALSO A CLEAR DEMONSTRATION OF BIEDENKOPF'S GROWING POPULARITY IN THE PARTY WHICH IS A HARBINGER FOR HIS POLITICAL PROSPECTS (E.G., A POSSIBLE CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE IN 1980).

8. THERE WERE SOME CHANGES IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE ADDITIONAL 20 MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD BUT THEY DO NOT REPRESENT ANY CHANGE IN THE POLITICAL INCLINA-

TION OF THE BOARD. VON WEIZSAECKER WAS ONCE AGAIN THE LEADING VOTE GETTER FOLLOWED BY PETER LORENZ (MORE A REFLECTION OF SYMPATHY FOR THE BERLIN CDU CHAIRMAN THAN A REFLECTION OF HIS IMPORTANCE IN THE NATIONAL CDU).

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9. STRAUSS' PERFORMANCE IN REGARD TO THE CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE ISSUE IS BEST EXPLAINED BY HIS SENSE OF PERSONAL DISAPPOINTMENT AND FRUSTRATION. CONTRARY TO CONVENTIONAL WISDOM, POLITICIANS ARE NOT THICK SKINNED, LEAST OF ALL STRAUSS. ALL THAT SAID, IT WILL BE NECESSARY FOR THE CDU AND CSU TO PUT ASIDE THEIR DIFFERENCES IF THEY ARE GOING TO BEAT HELMUT SCHMIDT NEXT YEAR. CDU LEADERS HOPE THE CSU WILL RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR UNION PARTY SOLIDARITY IF THEY ARE TO WIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY. IT IS CERTAIN THAT THE SPD AND FDP WILL NOT MISS ANY OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLOIT THESE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NOW AND THE ELECTIONS.
HILLENBRAND

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